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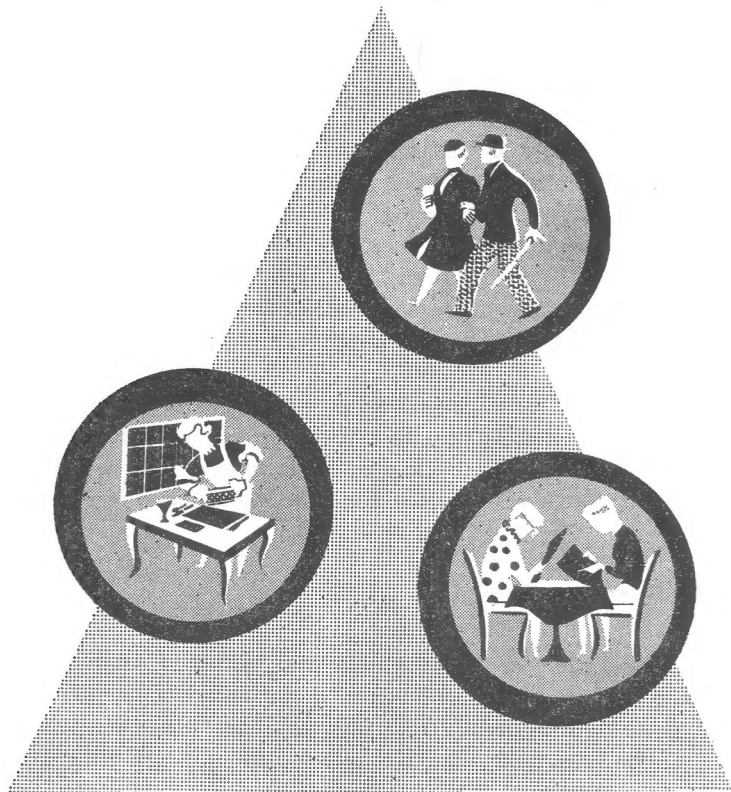
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Food guide

for older folks



Home and Garden Bulletin No. 17
U.S. Department of Agriculture



Food guide for older folks . . .

This booklet tells about older people's food needs and how to meet them. In addition, it suggests ways to meet special problems that often make it hard for an older person to be well fed.

Keep in mind: If you have a health problem, this guide is not meant to replace the advice that a doctor should give.

It's commonplace nowadays to have a l-o-n-g life.

But many men and women who have had 60 birthdays . . . or 70 . . . or more . . . aren't as healthy and happy as they might be if they would make a strong ally of food, letting it help in every possible way.

Being badly nourished is often the reason for complaints that drag an older person down, such as—

A chronic tired feeling . . . a gloomy outlook on life . . . anxiety over small things . . . loss of sleep . . . and, yes—even too much weight.

The right food helps the body to be at its best and, in event of illness, a well-nourished body responds better to treatment than one in a run-down condition.

Being well fed is such an advantage, and being poorly fed is such a handicap, that it's worth the effort to move out of the not-well-enough-fed class—if that's your state—and into the ranks of wise eaters.

First thing to do is consider your needs and see where you stand.

All life long you need—

. . . food that contains protein and minerals—materials required for upkeep of body tissues and bone. Some repair work goes on continually, but if the right materials from food are skimpy, repairs may be shoddy.

. . . food that supplies the many different vitamins needed. These vitamins, together with minerals and protein, make combination teams that keep the body running as smoothly as it should.

. . . food for fuel—for energy and warmth. Every food you eat supplies some calories for this—some foods more than others.

Usually an older person is not as active physically as when younger, and needs fewer calories. Yet, many a man or woman who is taking life more quietly goes right on eating meals and snacks that add up to a calorie surplus. In time, the excess shows up as fat.

Your responsibility

Since food has so much work to do all life long, you can never “retire” from responsibility for eating the kinds and amounts of food you need.

Beware of food fads and so-called wonder diets. They overemphasize some foods and ignore others that are important.

Don’t handicap yourself with a narrow diet for fear some wholesome food will cause acid mouth, sour stomach, or nausea. Such complaints are often signs that better food habits are needed—food more varied, not less. Cheese, for example, isn’t hard to digest when eaten as part of a meal. But the stomach may object to a cheese postscript after you’ve eaten heartily.

To help you choose

The daily food guide on pages 4 and 5 will help you to select the right kinds of food, whether you eat at home or out.

To show some ways to plan a market list for well-balanced meals for a week, three food plans are given on page 6. One of these plans can serve as your shopping guide as it stands. Or you can compare the kinds and quantities of food the plan suggests with those you regularly use, just to make sure that you are not short in any important kind.

To suggest ways of using this weekly food supply in meals, a set of menus is given on page 9.

About the daily food guide

You can get all of the kinds of food that make up well-balanced meals by following the simple guide on the following pages. Meals are well-balanced when they provide adequate amounts of protein, minerals, vitamins, and calories for body needs.

Foods within a group in the guide are similar enough to replace one another and to give ample choice for variety.

Include at least the minimum number of servings given for each group.

You’ll find that a few foods appear in more than one group . . . but don’t count one serving twice. And don’t shortchange yourself on size of servings. A sprig of parsley isn’t a serving of a vegetable, nor is a tablespoon of beans.

A daily food guide

Milk, cheese, ice cream

Milk is our leading source of calcium and riboflavin. It also provides high-quality protein and many other nutrients, including vitamin A unless the butterfat has been removed.

Use 2 or more cups of milk or its equivalent daily. The milk may be fresh fluid—whole or skim; evaporated; dry; buttermilk; or in cheese or ice cream. On the basis of calcium content, the following may be counted as alternates for 1 cup of milk: Cheddar-type cheese, $1\frac{1}{2}$ ounces; cream cheese, 1 pound; creamed cottage cheese, $\frac{3}{4}$ pound; ice cream, 1 scant pint.

Meat, poultry, fish; eggs; dry beans and peas, nuts

Use 2 or more servings from these groups daily.

Meat, poultry, fish.—These foods are important primarily for high-quality protein. They also provide iron, thiamine, riboflavin, and niacin.

Use at least 1 serving of any kind of meat, poultry, or fish every day. Include heart, liver, and other variety meats. Use bacon and salt pork sparingly—not more than $\frac{1}{2}$ pound to every 5 pounds of meat, poultry, and fish purchased.

Eggs.—Eggs are a source of high-quality protein, iron, vitamin A, thiamine, riboflavin, and vitamin D.

Use 4 or more a week.

Dry beans and peas, nuts.—These foods contain good protein, also some iron and niacin.

This group includes dry beans of all kinds, dry peas, lentils, soybeans, soya products, peanuts and other nuts, peanut butter.

These foods may be used occasionally as alternates for meat, poultry, fish, or eggs. The protein value is increased when some food that provides animal protein is served in the same meal—as bits of ham in split pea soup or beef with chili beans.

Grain products

When made from whole grain or restored or enriched with added vitamins and minerals, grain products provide significant amounts of iron, thiamine, riboflavin, and niacin.

Use 4 or more servings daily of whole-grain, enriched, or restored products, such as: Bread and other baked goods made from any kind of grain; cereals to be cooked, ready-to-eat cereals; rice, hominy grits, noodles, macaroni.

Vegetables and fruits

Use at least 4 servings of vegetables and fruits daily.

Citrus fruits, tomatoes.—Oranges, grapefruit, other citrus fruits, and tomatoes are mainstay sources of vitamin C.

Use at least 1 serving every day.

Some other fruits and vegetables are also valuable for vitamin C and may serve as alternates part of the time.

The following provide about the same amount of vitamin C as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (4 ounces) of orange or grapefruit juice: 2 tangerines; $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups (10 ounces) tomato

juice; $\frac{1}{2}$ of a medium-size cantaloup; $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup fresh strawberries; 1 cup shredded raw cabbage; $\frac{1}{2}$ cup broccoli or $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 cup brussels sprouts or dark-green leaves such as collards or kale, cooked briefly in a little water; a small green pepper.

Dark-green and deep-yellow vegetables.—Vegetables in this group are rich in vitamin A value and many provide worthwhile amounts of riboflavin and iron, and some calcium. If eaten raw or cooked for a short time in a little water, some of them, such as spinach, collards, and kale, are also good sources of vitamin C.

Use a serving at least every other day.

The group includes broccoli, green peppers, all kinds of greens—chard, collards, kale, spinach, and many others, cultivated and wild—carrots, pumpkin, sweetpotatoes, yellow winter squash.

Potatoes.—Potatoes provide worthwhile amounts of a number of minerals and vitamins, including iron, thiamine, riboflavin, and vitamin C.

Use them every day if you like.

Other vegetables and fruits.—The many vegetables and fruits not included in the groups already mentioned help toward a good diet by providing vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients. Because these foods contribute different amounts of the various

nutrients in a serving it's well to include a variety.

Use from 1 to 3 or more servings daily—to total at least 4 servings of vegetables and fruits from all groups.

This group includes: Asparagus, green lima beans, snap beans, beets, brussels sprouts, cabbage, celery, corn, cucumbers, lettuce, okra, onions, peas, sauerkraut, rutabagas, summer squash, turnips; apples, bananas, berries, dates, figs, grapes, melons, peaches, pears, plums, prunes, raisins, rhubarb—and any others available from the market or garden.

Fats and oils

All fats furnish many calories. Butter and margarine are rich in vitamin A.

Use some butter or margarine daily. Use fats sparingly in cooking.

The group includes butter, margarine, salad oils, mayonnaise, salad dressing, lard, shortening, meat drippings.

Sugars, sweets

Sugars and sweets are useful mainly for the calories they provide for body energy.

Use sparingly to add flavor to meals and for cooking.

Count in this group any kind of sugar—granulated (beet or cane), confectioner's, brown, maple; molasses or any kind of sirup or honey; jams, jellies, preserves; candy.

THREE FOOD PLANS—low-cost, moderate-cost, and liberal

(Quantities for a couple for a week, July 1961 prices)

KIND OF FOOD ¹	LOW-COST PLAN (\$12-\$14)		MODERATE-COST PLAN (\$16-\$18)		LIBERAL PLAN (\$19-\$21)	
	MAN	WOMAN	MAN	WOMAN	MAN	WOMAN
Milk, cheese, ice cream (milk equivalent ²)	3½ qt.	3½ qt.	3½ qt.	3½ qt.	4 qt.	4 qt.
Meat, poultry, fish	3¼ lb.	2½ lb.	5 lb.	4¼ lb.	5¼ lb.	4¾ lb.
Eggs	6	5	7	6	7	6
Dry beans and peas, nuts	4 oz.	4 oz.	2 oz.	2 oz.	2 oz.	1 oz.
Grain products—whole-grain, enriched, or restored (flour equivalent ³)	3½ lb.	2¼ lb.	3¼ lb.	1¾ lb.	3¼ lb.	1½ lb.
Citrus fruits, tomatoes	2¼ lb.	2 lb.	2¾ lb.	2¼ lb.	3 lb.	3 lb.
Dark-green and deep-yellow vegetables ⁴	¾ lb.	¾ lb.	¾ lb.	¾ lb.	¾ lb.	¾ lb.
Potatoes	2½ lb.	1¼ lb.	2¼ lb.	1¼ lb.	2 lb.	1 lb.
Other vegetables and fruits	4¾ lb.	3½ lb.	5½ lb.	4¼ lb.	6 lb.	4½ lb.
Fats and oils	⅔ lb.	¼ lb.	¾ lb.	⅜ lb.	¾ lb.	⅜ lb.
Sugars, sweets	⅔ lb.	⅜ lb.	⅞ lb.	½ lb.	1⅛ lb.	¾ lb.

¹ For foods in each group see pp. 4 and 5.

² For explanation of milk-equivalent foods see p. 4.

³ Count 1 lb. bread or other baked goods as ⅔ lb. flour or cereal.

⁴ If choices within the group are such that the amounts specified are not sufficient to provide the suggested number of servings, increase the amounts and use less from the "other vegetables and fruits" group.

About the food plans at the left

The three food plans on the opposite page, worked out by nutritionists, are guides for weekly shopping and meal planning.

The amounts are for food as it is brought into the kitchen from store or garden. They allow for discarding rinds and other inedible parts, but not for careless waste.

Amounts in each food group are for a man and woman of about 60 years of age—somewhat less active than in younger years. If you regularly work or exercise in strenuous fashion, step up quantities to take care of your need for extra energy. Potatoes, bread, and cereals will give you the extra calories and additional nutrients at low cost.

Low-cost plan . . . moderate-cost plan . . . liberal plan . . . any one of them will provide for nutritional needs.

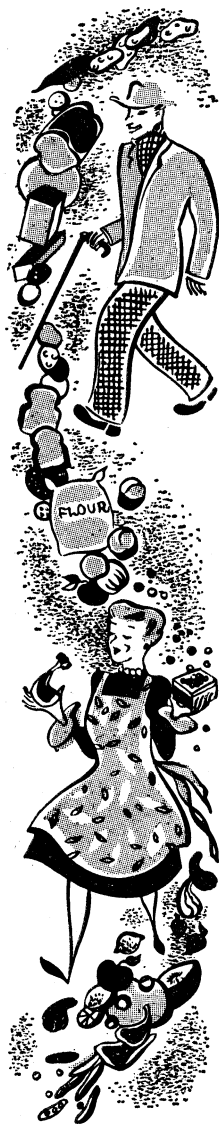
The main difference is, meals will be less varied if you keep to the low-cost plan.

The moderate-cost and liberal plans provide for larger amounts of meat, eggs, fruits, and vegetables. Also more expensive items within the groups, such as foods out of season and more highly processed foods, can be used.

But whether you spend more or less for food, try not to change very much the quantities suggested for milk and milk products, dark-green and deep-yellow vegetables, and tomatoes and citrus fruits.

The cost of each food plan, shown at the top of the plan, is based on the small-scale buying that suits an elderly couple.

Two together can be fed somewhat more cheaply than two separately. For one person living alone the week's marketing would total: Low-cost plan, man—\$7.50 to \$8.00; woman—\$6.00 to \$6.50; moderate-cost plan, man—\$10.00 to \$10.50; woman—\$8.00 to \$8.50; liberal plan, man—\$11.50 to \$12.00; woman—\$9.00 to \$9.50.



Be a good food divider

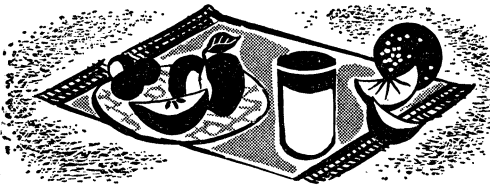
It's desirable, when it can be managed, to divide foods fairly evenly among meals.

Eating a large share of the day's food at one time gives the stomach a big task. If one meal must be heartier, midday is the best time for it. Sleep is generally sounder when the evening meal is light.

While three meals a day are the usual custom, many older people like to eat oftener—smaller amounts at a time. This works out just as well, provided the food eaten adds up to a good diet.

The sample menus on page 9 show how daily needs can be met with three meals. The same food might be divided into four or five meals. Or, some food might be saved out for snacks between meals or at bedtime. Many people find that warm milk at bedtime is an aid to restful sleep.

A frequent eater has two hazards to watch out for:



One is forming the habit of filling up on toast and tea or cake and coffee, so that there is no appetite for milk, vegetables, fruit, or other needed foods. The other hazard is getting too much food—too many calories—and gaining unwanted weight.

A week's menus using foods in low-cost food plan

The following menus show one way to make well-balanced meals from the amounts of food suggested on page 6. These menus are for three daily meals, easy to prepare. They also show the use of planned leftovers. For example, enough stew is prepared for Monday evening to serve for Tuesday noon as well. A package of chocolate pudding serves four—so for a couple, two servings could be used Sunday noon, and the rest kept cold in the refrigerator until Monday night.

Some of the meals include more food items than others, but the meals are fairly equal in quantity. If you prefer to divide food into four or five “meals” a day, some can be saved out for midmorning and afternoon or evening snacks. For example, in the menu for Wednesday, the gingerbread in the evening meal could be eaten at teatime with milk. Or, on Thursday, the peanut butter biscuit could be served in the morning with tea, and the gingerbread as a snack in the afternoon with milk.

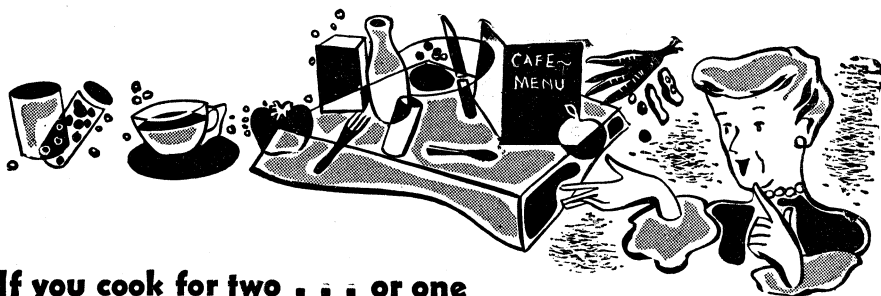
Very likely, these menus will not fit entirely in your situation. The dishes you serve may differ because of season, the place you live, your kitchen equipment, and your own food likes.

Sample Menus for a Week

Butter or margarine would be served with these meals, a glass of milk at least once a day, tea or coffee as desired

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Orange juice Scrambled egg Toast	Orange juice Oatmeal Milk Toast	Prunes French toast Sirup	Orange slices Soft-cooked egg Toasted rolls	Prunes Ready-to-eat cereal Milk Peanut butter biscuits	Tomato juice Milk toast Jelly	Orange juice Oatmeal Milk Toasted corn muffins
Swiss steak Mashed potatoes Broccoli Bread Chocolate pudding	Frankfurters stuffed with mashed potatoes and cheese Scalloped tomatoes Hot rolls Apple brown betty	Lamb stew Beets Tossed green salad Bread Rice and raisin pudding	Meat loaf Scalloped potatoes Steamed cabbage Peanut butter biscuits Fruit in season	Cream of tomato soup Egg salad-shredded lettuce sandwich Gingerbread	Creamed egg and mushrooms on noodles Cabbage, carrot, raisin salad	Braised liver Potatoes boiled in jackets Green peas Grated carrot salad Bread Orange-milk sherbet
Welsh rarebit Crisp bacon strip Apple-raisin salad Ice cream Cookies	Lamb stew with potatoes Snap beans Bread Chocolate pudding	Spaghetti, tomato, chopped meat casserole Broccoli Bread Grapefruit segments	Cheese fondue Snap beans Bread Peaches Gingerbread	Meat loaf— tomato sauce Creamed potatoes Spinach Bread Tapioca pudding	Baked fish Baked potato slices Green peas Corn muffins Tapioca pudding	Vegetable-bean soup Toasted cheese sandwich Fruit in season

If there's a problem



If you cook for two . . . or one

Fixing meals for two, or yourself alone, is far less work than feeding a crew. That's the bright side.

On the other hand, managing food on a midget scale has its problems, particularly for the person who finds food chores a burden, or maybe just isn't hungry. Yet eating fairly regular meals, properly served, is a habit far too important to lose.

Here are a few suggestions that can be used in small-scale shopping, cooking, and serving.

When you buy

Take care not to buy more food than you can easily use. This calls for some new buying habits, if you are an old hand at thrift on a larger scale. A big, economy-size package or a large quantity of a food specially priced is no bargain if you tire of it and it grows stale or spoils. In the long run, small purchases of most foods are thriftier for the family of one or two. Recipes for two will help you to estimate how much to buy.

Keep up to date on prices of foods used in the same way in meals.

When comparing prices, figure cost per serving rather than what you pay for a pound. For example, if meat has much gristle or bone, 1 usual size serving may take half a pound, or even a pound. At the other extreme, if there is no bone, a pound makes 4 or 5 servings of average size. A pound of fresh peas in the pod will make about 2 half-cup servings, a pound of snap beans, about 5.

When you cook

- **Have recipes ready.**—It's easier to get variety into meals when recipes and ideas are handy. So, keep your favorite recipes, for 2 or 1, where they remind you quickly that there is more than one way to combine, cook, and season. And by all means try something new now and again.
- **Avoid a last-minute rush.**—Preparing meals is less hurried and tiring when some of the food is partly or fully prepared in advance. As one

example, dry mixes for quick breads, cakes, and puddings keep well, especially in cool storage, and portions can be measured out and used at your convenience. Mixes can be either bought or made at home by recipe.

● Use leftovers to advantage.—No one wants to use too many. However, planned leftovers can be an asset, saving time and money. It's the dabs of food, left over because of misjudging quantities or appetites, that most often are wasted. So keep the dabs to a minimum. Store leftovers covered and cold, and use them up promptly.

Using leftovers, large or small, to put variety into another meal is often better than serving the food just the same way over again. For example—

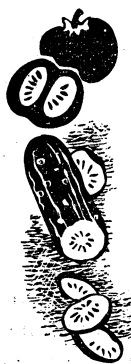
Salads may be all the better by using odds and ends—

Top a tossed salad with cut strips of leftover ham, chicken, pork, or veal.

Mix leftover cooked vegetables with raw fresh ones, such as chopped celery, cucumber slices, tomatoes, green pepper, shredded cabbage.

Try leftover cooked fruits with small cream cheese balls, or grated cheese; or add a banana and sprinkle with plain or toasted coconut.

If leftovers make a dull salad, put extra zip in the dressing for more flavor. If it's a fruit salad, mix a little lemon or other fruit juice with the dressing. If it's a meat or vegetable salad, add a bit of relish, snappy cheese, or diced cucumber to a cooked dressing, or drop a cut garlic clove into a french dressing a day or two before using.



One-dish meals put leftovers to good use. Meat may be combined with vegetables, macaroni, rice. Add a cheese or tomato sauce, or just plain white sauce and heat in a baking dish. And, if you have them handy, chopped tomatoes or green onions or chives will give extra flavor and color to the dish.



Omelets become special when they enfold bits of cheese or tomato, green onions, peas, or ham, chicken, or bacon.

Bread can be used in cheese fondue, scalloped dishes, bread pudding, french or milk toast. Or toast bread and top it with a sliced frankfurter and a thin slice of Cheddar cheese, broil till cheese is melted.

Vegetables, meat, fish, or chicken may be creamed or used with a tasty sauce. For a quick and easy sauce, use a can of tomato or mushroom soup. If the leftover is a bit skimpy, a hard-cooked egg may stretch it to serving size.





Sandwiches are an easy way to serve leftover meat or baked beans. Slice or grind meat and mix with a little catsup, relish, or sweet pickle. Mash beans and pep them up with catsup, chili sauce, or pickle.

When using up leftovers, take care not to add so much new food that you wind up having to use leftover leftovers.

- For shortcuts, try combination dishes.—Many canned and packaged foods can be combined with other foods to make appetizing dishes that are easily prepared. Here are some combinations that can be changed about to use foods in your larder:

Canned tomato soup used undiluted as a sauce over meat balls, or with quick-cooking rice to make Spanish rice.

Processed cheese melted over asparagus or broccoli, or cheese blended with a white sauce seasoned with a little mustard and served on toast or crackers.

Canned corned beef hash formed into patties and grilled with a slice of pineapple on top.

Canned macaroni or spaghetti in cheese or tomato sauce, combined with ground meat, tuna, cut-up cooked chicken or ham, dried beef, or frankfurters, and baked to blend flavors.

Canned tuna or chicken with chopped onion and green pepper added and combined with condensed chicken soup. Top with baking powder biscuit if baked.

- Let the oven help.—If your stove has an oven, use it to make cooking easier. As a rule, food in the oven takes less watching than food on top of stove; often an entire meal can be cooked at the same time.

- Freezing helps, too.—If you have a freezer or a frozen food compartment in your refrigerator, save some effort by keeping frozen food on hand or freezing food—uncooked or cooked—for later use.

When you serve

If setting a table for one or two seems burdensome, don't drift into the habit of eating standing up at the kitchen counter. Look for ways to make eating time comfortable and interesting with the least possible effort.

Have pretty place mats—less trouble than a tablecloth. Or, put a mat on an individual tray and serve the meal on the tray. Meals on individual trays may be carried to a table or chair by the window or television, or out on the porch or lawn where you are more likely to eat slowly and enjoy your meal.

Lightweight trays of convenient size are step-saving assistants. Use a tray to collect silver, food, and other things that go on the table. A cart, or small table mounted on casters, is another step-saving aid.

If you haven't much equipment

Even when cooking equipment consists of a single gas or electric burner, you can still have meals complete and varied.

One-dish meals are one answer. Into a single pot or pan go the vegetables and the meat or other protein food of a main dish. Many hot and nourishing meals of this kind can be cooked on top of stove—such as Irish stew, braised liver or pot roast with vegetables, ham-and-vegetable or fish chowder, New England boiled dinner. To round out a one-dish meal, add a crisp salad or other raw food, bread, a beverage, and possibly a simple dessert.

When time permits, a series of dishes for a meal can be prepared on one burner. A cast-iron or cast-aluminum fry pan with a tight lid is especially good for keeping one food hot while another is cooking.

For an example of this type of meal-getting, a dessert that is to be served cold would be prepared first. Then, you might cook ground meat in a fry pan and combine it with cooked spaghetti and tomato sauce. When this is ready, set it aside while a vegetable is quickly cooked. A beverage can be in preparation while the meal is being served.

A double boiler also helps in preparing a meal on one burner. Such foods as creamed eggs or fish, left over the water, will keep hot while a vegetable is cooked. Or a “double-boiler meal” can be served with a salad or a raw vegetable, such as sliced tomatoes or cucumbers.

Try “double-decker” cooking. While the boiling water in the lower pan of a double boiler cooks a potato, an ear of corn, or some other vegetable that is cooked in a fair amount of water, rolls may be warming in the upper pan. Or, use the upper pan for reheating leftover cooked meat in gravy.

If an electric roaster is added to the small surface units, cooking may be as varied as in any kitchen. Some roasters are equipped with a broiler and fry pan unit, making a complete “range” on a small scale. An electric fry pan also can be used in many ways.

If you eat out

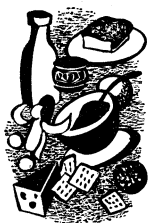
Wherever you eat, help yourself to a good diet by choosing food according to the guide on pages 4 and 5.

When buying meals, it's smart shopping to read both columns on a bill of fare, and to judge price and food list together. Look for good values in nourishment for your money—they aren't always the most costly dishes.

A “special” is no bargain if the combination it offers will fill you up with one kind of food—starches, for example—and you go short that day on vegetables, fruit, or milk.

Before dinner is a good time to think back to what you have already eaten that day. Then, when you scan the dinner menu, choose foods that will round out your day's good eating.

If dinner only is eaten out and you fix other meals at home, it's money in your pocket. Here are some foods that can supplement restaurant meals and do not require cooking:



Milk—fresh, evaporated, or dried; buttermilk.

Fresh fruits—oranges, and other fruits in season—canned citrus and other juices; dried fruit.

Breads and crackers—whole-wheat or enriched bread, rolls, coffee cake, graham or wheat crackers.

Peanut butter, cheese, luncheon meats.

Prepared cereals.

If you live with others

If you board, or eat with another family, you can help yourself to a good diet by choosing the foods you need from what is served. The food guide will show whether the meals provide the different kinds needed. If you are short on any group of foods, try to supplement the meals, whatever the lack may be. It may be only to add an egg, extra glass of milk, or some fruit or fruit juice.

If you need to watch weight

If you are much too stout or too thin, or have anything wrong with heart or other organs, don't try to change weight except under a physician's guidance. If you are not in these groups, and try to add or subtract a few pounds, take it slowly. A pound a week is plenty.

- **Overweight.**—That's a sign to use sparingly all kinds of fats and sweets. They are concentrated foods, high in calories. Say "No" to pastries, rich desserts, and gravies except on special occasions. Use the smallest amounts of butter or margarine, cream, salad dressing, sirup, or sugar, if they help make food more appetizing.

Eat moderately of breads, crackers, and other grain products. Don't skimp on vegetables, fresh fruits, milk, eggs, and lean meats. You need as much as ever of these.

- **Underweight.**—Your answer is to increase gradually the amount eaten—a little more milk, eggs, meats, vegetables, fruit, enriched cereals, baked goods.

You can use to advantage in meals some of the sweets and other extras that are rich in calories, provided they don't take away your appetite for food you need more. And you can put on pounds by adding extra food between meals—milk, eggnog, cocoa, ice cream.

The following suggestions for coaxing appetite may help.

If there's need to coax appetite

Walking or other light exercise is an appetite builder. Keeping regular mealtimes and making meals attractive also will help to coax back a lost appetite.

Don't forget that ways to make meals interesting are to include on your plate—

Some food of distinctive flavor, to contrast with mild-flavored foods.

Something crisp, even if it is only a pickle or a lettuce leaf, for contrast with softer foods in the meal.

Some bright-colored food, for eye appeal.

As people grow older, senses of taste and smell are less keen. So, if you find it dull eating some kinds of food that you need, give more attention to flavor and seasoning. Even a very little of a flavorful food makes a bland food more appetizing.

If you want to "pep up" some food or vary its taste, you can generally find a seasoning or combination to suit. Many people enjoy such seasonings as onion, chives, parsley, mint, chopped celery leaves. An unfamiliar herb or spice is worth trying as an occasional adventure. Use it delicately because aromatic oils are strong.



If food must be easy to chew

When teeth are faulty, food is sometimes chewed poorly. This leaves the stomach more work to do, and discomfort may follow. With this chain of problems, people sometimes fall back on a diet so limited as to result in malnutrition. It really needn't happen.

The best dental repairs within reason are a health investment. But if faulty chewing is a temporary handicap, or one that must be put up with, don't let this rob you of a varied diet and enjoyment of eating.

Change the preparation, not the food. Cube, chop, or grind foods that are difficult to chew. Let your knife do part of the work for your teeth.

Here are some suggestions to show how to include foods from all the groups (pp. 4 and 5) that make up a balanced diet.

Meat or chicken cut in small pieces may be creamed, or combined with potatoes, peas, rice, or noodles. Fish is easy to chew when prepared in most of the usual ways—baked, broiled, used in chowders, flaked in creamed dishes.

American cheese is easy to eat if finely divided or melted, as in cheese sauce, and served over toast cubes, cut-up asparagus or broccoli, or in cheese souffle, cheese omelet. Try cottage cheese with salad dressing or canned fruit.

Eggs may be cooked all the ways you like them. Crisp bacon chopped fine adds zest to eggs.

Use a great deal of milk to drink and in cooking. It may be used in many soups, creamed and scalloped dishes, puddings, custards, beverages.

Cooked fruits and vegetables may be chopped, mashed, or even strained if need be. Most canned fruits are softer than fresh. Many kinds of fruit and vegetable juices, canned and frozen, are on the market to choose from.

Whole grains of corn are hard to chew, but corn pudding made with cream-style corn is easy to eat. Seeds and skins from tomatoes can be strained out if they bother. The canned vegetables and other foods chopped or ground for young children are worth trying. Usually they are quite bland and need added seasoning.

All kinds of cooked cereals are suitable, or dry cereals soaked with milk; and there are griddlecakes, milk toast, or shortcake over which crushed fruit and juice or cream has been poured.

For dessert, besides custards, puddings, and fruit, there is gelatin, plain and whipped, junket, ice cream, or soft cakes. All of these can be varied by using different fruit juices or sauces with them.



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